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Best Illinois High School Writing of 1945

Selected by CHARLES W. ROBERTS

University of Illinois

FOREWORD

The compiler of this collection of student writing must admit that he has not been able to examine all of the best compositions produced in all Illinois high schools in 1945. He trusts that the selection he has made from the material submitted is representative of what is being done by the better students in schools throughout the state. It is his earnest hope that teachers and students will accept the challenge which this issue offers and will resolve now to be represented in *Best Illinois High School Writing of 1946*. All contributions should be addressed to *Illinois English Bulletin*, 204a Lincoln Hall, Urbana, Illinois. Each manuscript should bear the name of the author, the name of his high school, and the name of his English teacher. No manuscripts will be returned unless they are accompanied by return postage.

C. W. R.

ONE DAY, THEN — DARKNESS

"You have twenty-four hours left in which to see," said our optometrist, after a thorough examination. Chills ran up and down my spine. I blinked my eyes and wondered.

What is this world of darkness that I am soon to enter going to be like? What impressions must I take with me into the blackness?

There are people I want to see and old places that mean so much to me that I want to visit before darkness settles. Where shall I start?

A jaunt down to the corner drugstore to see my friends. Yes, that is one of the first things I must do. I long to study them; watch their

actions and expressions. I want to develop a mental picture of each of them.

I want to be able to visualize the funny faces that Kay always provides when she becomes excited; and that funny walk of Jane's when she is in a hurry.

Above all I want to glance around the drugstore to see the familiar coke advertisements. I want to sit in a booth, sipping a coke, while I watch the old gang come and go. I will probably roam over to the "juke box" and deposit a nickel to play my favorite piece, and watch the record spin around and around and around. What about the soda fountain and familiar employees? All of these appear to be a part of my life.

Slowly I shall journey homeward, glancing in all of the stores that have some remembrance attached to them. I shall pass by the church that I have known for so long. My eyes will move up toward the belfry to catch sight of the huge bell that calls us to church every Sunday morning. From quivering lips a prayer will be murmured. Silently I shall continue my journey. Reaching home I shall stop at the driveway to view the beautifully painted leaves drifting from the trees. The neighbor boy will stop raking leaves long enough to toss a walnut to a nearby squirrel, which will scramble up the tree to perch on a limb and gnaw away on his prize package. The crackling of flames of a nearby bonfire will cause me to look around to watch the smoke whirl through the cool air. Flying over head, an army of geese will attract my attention until "Blackie," the neighbor's dog, will come running over to greet me. His smooth red tongue will lick my hand as I stoop to give him his daily piece of candy.

Into the kitchen I will wander. The plaques on the wall, the novelty cookie jar on the refrigerator, the attractive curtains at the window — all of these I have loved.

Unconsciously, I shall roam into the living room, pick up the picture on the end table and grasp it tightly, staring at the portrait. Nonchalantly I shall play a few notes on the piano.

Sitting in the big easy chair, I shall slowly move my eyes from one person to the other. I shall watch my smiling mother, who to me is so dear, and my sweet kid sister sitting at my feet.

All at once — darkness! I'm not afraid. No, I'm really not in darkness because my mind still lives.

— ILENE OZELLA, Pekin Community High School
Bernice Falkin, teacher

THE LONELY ROAD

The little road among the hills
Is hidden by the trees;
But when the early sun distills
The faintest morning breeze
From every hidden chimney lifts
A tiny thread of blue.
Above the crowded trees it drifts,
Each little skein a clue
That neighbors down the lonely road
Have put the night away,
And each in his remote abode,
Has wakened for the day.

— VIRGINIA KING
Pekin Community High School
Mary L. Robison, teacher

COURAGE

Grey-white clouds hung heavy all day long;
The earth was damp and cold. The hopeful spring
Had turned her back and fled. The man was gone.
The grave engulfed her dead. The rain fell on.
The only movement seemed to be the grass
Holding its back against the bitter wind.
The earth was damp and sad; and darkness fell.
The night was black and cold as death itself,
For man had passed again from dust to dust.

And then there came a change. The rain had stopped;
The air felt warmer; grass had turned to face
A gentle breeze; the clouds had run before
The southern wind; and spring returned with hope.

The earth was fragrant here where she was plowed,
And seemed to lie in waiting for the seed.
The sky was covered with a million lights,
The candles of the angels twinkling bright.
A soul had quit its body for above,
But left a little of its courage here.

— CORA LOWE
Naperville High School
Dorothy Scroggie, teacher

HARMONY IN BLACK AND WHITE

The memories of my childhood experiences in Africa are inseparably bound to the senses of sound and smell. This becomes particularly true in the fall.

As I begin to write, it is fall here in Illinois. The leaves swirl down from the trees, and in the country the ripened cornfields stretch away toward the horizon. Those cornfields bring back to me memories of fife-time in Africa.

My African playmates made fifes out of cornstalk, hollowing them out and cutting notches in the top. There were three hundred children in the school I attended, and it seemed that everyone of those children had to have a fife. After school was out, my black friends and I scampered away to the cornfields, got some of the stalk, and came back blowing fifes. Then, all evening the shrill sound of whistling fifes filled the valley until those with nervous dispositions were driven nearly mad. As the fife-blown season advanced, toward the close of each school-day a certain eagerness permeated the atmosphere. As soon as school was dismissed, every scholar seized his fife and dashed out the building into the large courtyard in the center. Winding back and forth, twisting in snakelike fashion, we danced, playing our fifes, some beating tom-toms, and the smaller children just clapping their hands. I can see us yet, writhing back and forth in rhythm to our bewitching African music.

In the fall of the year, I remember another stirring part of Africa's life. Fall in Africa is the proper time to get married, just as in America June is the month for brides. At night as I lay in my bed, I heard the wedding festivities going on all around me. Since it took two weeks to get married and there were several marriages in one village at the same time, fall nights were usually sleepless ones for the white man and his children. The wedding music had to be played continuously throughout the two weeks; if it stopped for even ten minutes, the marriage was not valid and the ceremony started over again. The music was made on drums and a gulum, a banjo type instrument played by strumming. The player sang as he performed. Despairing of sleep in the midst of this excitement, my parents, my brother Stanley, and I often walked to the village and watched the ceremonies. Here we found the gulum player leaning against the house chanting his weird songs, the firelight glistening on his white teeth. The men and women of the village, leaping around the bonfire, merrily performed their tribal folk dances, the moonlight shining on their bodies. Dust rose from their shuffling feet; and as they perspired, the fire reflected on their bodies, making them appear like polished ebony gods.

Added to all this noise during the month of fall was the restless lowing of the cattle in their kraals. This rose to excited bawling and stampeding when the lions came too close. In the night time I also

heard the sheep bleating; and finally, lulled by all these sounds, I fell asleep. Often I woke with a start. What was that? The sheep, baa-ing loudly, informed me a leopard had come too close for their comfort. Then the aroused men of the village started shouting wildly as they threw spears at the leopard in an effort to drive it away. Above this mingled confusion, the pigs squealed frantically; and I knew the leopard had gone in their direction for food. Finally I went to sleep again.

Since my father spent much of his time in Africa travelling, my mother, brother, and I often took quite lengthy treks. We rode horseback and our carriers came along after us with our food, cooking utensils, and, in the rainy season, a tent. In the dry season we slept under the stars.

Frequently we set up our tent on the high bank of a river. At night as we lay resting on our beds we could hear the lapping of animals as they came to the river to drink. The people in one village had told us that a lion often came to drink directly across the river from where our tent was pitched. On one occasion we crept out and waved our lantern in his direction, but all we could see was a dark, yellow shadow slinking away. The sight of that shadow added a note of excitement and suspense to our adventure. In the night as we lay on our cots, we listened to the leopards screeching, hyenas laughing, and monkeys chattering until these African sounds merged into monotony and we fell asleep.

One night my brother Stanley and I were very tired. Because Mother and Daddy did not want to expose us to the dangers of tropical mosquitoes, they said we were to go back to the tent and sleep, and two of our gun-carriers were to guard us. We crawled into bed, and the two gun boys watched outside by the fire. The guns were in the tent and the boys had no weapons, but acting upon the general belief that wild animals stay away from fire, no one was worried. Hearing the lion roar, the boys shifted uneasily and added fuel to the flames. Then the roaring grew fainter as the lion went up the river on the other side. Gradually the boys relaxed their tension and were soon chatting between themselves once more. Then one of them sat up with a start and prodded the other. They both listened. The lion roared again. To their horror the sound was closer than it had been the last time and it was now on our side of the river. The boys quickly began debating what to do if the lion came closer. The weapons were in the tent, but neither of the boys had ever operated a gun. They had only carried them. Entering the tent, they got the guns and then sat by the fire again. There the boys discussed how the weapons worked. They had seen Daddy fire at game many times, so they pushed this little button and pulled that and finally agreed that they could shoot it now. As the lion crept closer, the boys did not move. Its padded footfalls sounded much like the noise made by a barefooted person walking across the ground. Finally the lion went

behind the tent. The boys got up and stealthily slipped to the opposite side. As the lion came around the end, they saw that it was crouched ready to spring. Realizing they must act immediately, they fired several shots as the lion sprang. Then they saw the lion did not have designs upon us but upon a chicken fastened to the tent peg. The shots startled the lion, but he concluded his spring, seized the chicken, and quickly bounded away.

As I sit here in Illinois listening to the English language, which many times is rather flatly spoken, I recall the incessant and more musical conversations of the Africans. I recall, too, the first baby words I ever spoke. They were not the usual English "ma-ma" or "da-da" but pleasant African sounds—"Marmbwā" and "Mdivki" which meant "mother of the house" and "master of the stockade." Even my parents seldom spoke English; they had gotten into the habit of talking the African language. When I spoke to my brother, I called him "bzir-mwarmba." I wondered why I had to learn English when everyone else spoke African and I did my thinking in that language. When I got my first ride on horse, I said happily, "taku, taku." When I saw my first chicken, I chased it and screamed, "tika, mtika."

I shall never be able to disassociate my memory of African experiences from the sounds which are as much a part of the continent as are the people themselves. But even more memorable are its smells. These odors also associate themselves with fall.

The smell of burning leaves in Illinois carries me back to Africa. Every fall the Africans burned the Soudan grass off the plains. This grass grew so tall that often as we jogged along the Nigerian trails on horseback we were unable to see above it even from the saddle. After clearing a space around their village to make it free from vegetation of any kind, because of the extreme danger of fire to their grass huts, the Africans started the fires. This they did with two pieces of wood or with flint and iron. Then the men took turns keeping the fire out of the village. When it reached another village, those inhabitants similarly guarded their homes. Thus, the fires, leaving in their wake only black, charred stubble, swept across Africa. Then we were able to see the sky again, and the stars and the moon seemed crystal clear. At night as we stood on our porch, we watched the fires on all sides of us raging down the valley and illuminating the night like day. In the darkness of the tropical night, these fires looked like life lines to heaven as they climbed toward the tops of the highest mountains.

There were other types of burning, too, some of which were not so pleasant. The burning of the heaps of goat manure continued until there was left only a white, hard substance that would not burn. This the natives used for table salt. Goat manure fires did not smell as refreshing as did the burning Soudan grass.

There was always in Africa the peculiar smell of perspiring bodies, because the African sun was hot. It was not an offensive odor, just distinctive.

All too soon our years in Africa came to an end. We began to make preparations to come to a place my father and mother called home; but my home was in Africa. I had been born there. My playmates were African boys and girls; with them I had hunted, fished, and played dolls. I had been with them all day and had known very few white children. Nevertheless, like a seedling, I was uprooted and transplanted; a bit of Africa dropped here in Illinois. And now as I think upon my experiences there, in perspective I remember them inseparably bound to the senses of sound and smell.

— PATTIE BITTINGER, Elgin High School
Marjory Stoffregen, teacher

A MODERN CANTERBURY PROLOGUE

[By students in Mercy High School, Chicago,
Sister Mary Evelyn, teacher]

Befell it once in bright blue days of Fall
In Washington we gathered, travelers all,
To start our journey to a distant land,
With governmental orders well in hand;
Into the airport came to say "Good-bye,"
Full ten and five strong Yankees set to fly —
We were an odd mixed group, made friends by fate;
Before I tell my tale I'd like to state
Their culture, customs, manners, dress and art,
And with the one who flies our plane I'll start:

— MARIAN DWYER

THE PILOT

He said he loved his flying more than life,
That is, until the time he took a wife,
And now he thought of little else but home!
His choice was not in foreign lands to roam,
It kept him from his babe he'd never seen,
And from the fairest of this earth, his Queen,
But ever when the laughter waned, 'twas he who
Imparted gaiety to all the crew.

— CATHERINE SCHAFFER

THE CO-PILOT

With him there was another one to fly
And guide our goodly plane right through the sky,
This flyer was a gay young man, and bright,
Who wore an Oak Leaf gained in combat flight;
He often spent his spare time playing jokes,
With which to puzzle practical old folks;
Between his flights he always could be found
Where food and drink and women were around,
But when the need for courage was at hand,
He was the bravest of our little band.

— MIDGE WINGERING

THE NUN

And of the passengers we'll now espouse,
The first one was a maid who had three vows;
A happy, jovial, carefree nun was she,
But prayful always even when she's free;
Because this trip to her was just the thing,
She kept the riders merry when she'd sing;
So traveled was she in these far-off lands,
That she was met oft' by reception bands.

— NATHALIE DES CHATELETS

THE PRIEST

He was a Chaplain, kindly, brave, and true,
His motto, "Give to every man his due";
This saintly priest brought faith to those in doubt,
When winning souls from sin, with joy he'd shout;
He labored hard among the poor and sick,
Performing duties in life's thin and thick;
He saw to it that nothing was half done,
He could not rest until all souls were won.

— RITA SESSA

THE DANCER

And also now with these there came a lass,
Whose dress from head to foot was all first class,
She laughed and joked with any that were near,
But others' jokes she could not bear to hear;
Now on the plane she sang and danced with ease,
And always tried to make her dancing please;
We loved to watch her jive to Jimmie's croon;
She and Co-Pilot were on Honey-moon.

— SHEILA CAVANAUGH

THE ACTOR

He easily kept us happy all the way,
For he had come from Hollywood, they say;
Because he went to entertain our men,
The whole world loved this great comedian,
Whose body was so corpulent that he
At table was a funny sight to see;
One could not sit beside him when he ate,
For fear his elbows vast get in one's plate;
Then, too, the airplane was a scourge for him,
Despite fine clothes he never could look trim,
Yet, still, with all his unkempt looks, full well
We loved the jolly stories he could tell.

— RITA SESSA

THE STAR

She sparkled glamour here among our crowd,
She minced her steps all down the aisle, nor bowed;
With head held high, she smiled — not commonplace —
She sat with nonchalant and hauty grace;
She blinked her big brown eyes at every male,
That's why she was the pin-up girl at Yale;
She led a life that only few would do —
Her husbands were, of course, far more than two.

— PAT SULLIVAN

THE DOCTOR

Among this war-bound group a doctor stands,
Who loves to help the sick with skillful hands,
Immense in stature, handsome to extreme,
He was one time the lonely maidens' dream;
But then professional honor was at stake,
For his ideals had been one grave mistake;
Because of fame, he used his skill to cure,
And fees immense he always made secure;
But woes of war have taught him sympathy,
And now he serves for love and liberty.

— MARY O'LANE

THE NURSES

Also with him there were two women fair,
Whose nurse's uniform they loved to wear
For love of Doctor Brown, as all could see,
While in their hearts there was much jealousy;
Miss Kate was just a tearful mournful Miss,
Whose love for Doctor Brown beguiled, and this
Was what had brought her on the trip, and why
If he were there she cared not though she'd die;
The other one, a gay nurse, served us well,
And everyone loved her for tales she'd tell;
Young Doctor Brown, too, loved young Nurse O'Day,
He'd watch her work, and by her side he'd stay;
Her love for Doctor Brown was deep and true,
That's why the Doctor loved her too, we knew.

— CATHERINE O'BRIEN

THE CORRESPONDENT

The correspondent was a lonesome gent,
Whose self-esteem received an awful dent;
He was a very learned man, I know,
He's erudition's pride from top to toe;
Of this world's goods he had more than his share,
But little did the other riders care;
So in the deepest of chagrin he'd ride
With no one but his shadow by his side.

— PAT CONNOLE

THE PHOTOGRAPHER

A man there was to take some pictures, too,
A hardened character he was all through;
A jinx his telling flash-shots were to those
Who did not wish identity disclosed;
He cared not whom he ruined by his false gains,
He cared not for the war with all its pains;
He'd climbed the mountains and the trees,
Borne beatings of the blizzards and the seas,
These never made him fearful for his fate,
But far from earth — unhappy was his state!

— MARY J. TOBIN

THE POLITICIAN

Wily, artfully, he spoke of friends
Whose "influence" helped him gain his doubtful ends,
The way he talked with ease of this dread war,
We knew he was a money-making bore;
For power this cunning, greedy man aspired,
Of his own wit he never did grow tired,
He said the people were his only thought,
And that for his own comfort he cared naught,
But everyone there knew what was his aim,
And heard his tales with apathetic pain;
He thought the trip was just like going fishin'—
This scheming, pussy-footed politician.

— DOLORES FIALKOWSKI

THE SOLDIER

Now on the journey strange there was a lad,
Whose manly face was fair and wan and sad,
At first glance you might think of him as old,
And yet there was a look of his that told
The years were few that passed since last a boy
Of freckled turned-up nose, had held some toy
In chubby hands, or climbed a tree with ease
Of limbs, or pulled the braids of girls to tease.
But twenty, he had seen war's bitter hate,
Its pains, its fears, its treaties made too late;
To fight that life at home might be again,
He'd flown his plane and killed his fellow-men,

He'd cried at night, for youth was still the same,
And then one night his plane had caught the flame!
He'd lived! He'd been sent home to be made strong,
But he was restless, and he dreamed at night,
That Uncle Sam had said he still must fight,
And though he hated — almost feared — that hell
Through which he'd come, he now was strong and well,
And going back to fight till guns will cease;
He cannot rest until the world's at peace!

— MARION DWYER

WATER IS A LOVELY THING

Water is a lovely thing:
Dark and ripply in a spring,
Black and quiet in a pool,
In a puddle, brown and cool,
In a river, blue and gray,
In a rain-drop, silvery gay,
In a fountain, flashing white,
In the sunrays, diamond bright,
In a pitcher, frosty cold,
In a bubble, pink and gold,
In a happy summer sea,
Just as green as green can be,
In a rainbow, far unfurled,
Every color in the world.
All the year from spring to spring
Water is a lovely thing!

— MATILDA JANE EARL

Metamora Township High School

Lelah Allison, teacher

PEACE

What is peace?
It's hard to say.
It's everything we do afid think and feel
That's right and good
And won't hurt anyone.
It's no partings or sad farewells,
No letters or telegrams:
"The War Department regrets to inform you—"
It's not only shoes and sugar,
Meat and everything that's scarce,
It's something deeper — farther down.
It's flags in green grass,
Instead of bloody battlefields.
It's giving money just to help the poor,
It's lower wages but fewer taxes.
It's more, too. Much more.
It's what America stands for:
The way we live,
Having measles, falling in love,
Ice cream, fried chicken, apple pie,
People hating only umpires,
Drives on Sunday — long ones,
Swimming, playing, working,
All with peaceful hearts and thoughts.
It's living where you want to live,
Going to school to study what you please,
Going to church where you wish,
It's food, clothing,
Interest in, not fear of, airplanes,
Peaceful, untroubled sleep.
What is peace?
It's hard to say.
It's something we can really only feel.

— JEANNE SEVETSON
Naperville High School
Dorothy Scroggie, teacher

TAPS

A deep hush settles o'er the island
And sacred silence prevails aboard the ships,
As a silhouetted figure stands,
And slowly lifts a bugle to his lips.

As the mournful tones drift out to sea,
Muffled sounds are heard, and lips begin to part
In silent prayer for buddies passed away,
Prayers not from the lips but from the heart.

On the beach stand row on row of crosses,
Some marked "Unknown"; some bear names of boys
Who are on their way to distant shores,
Away from the horror of battle, and its noise.

Chevroned sleeves are still, and caps with braid
Cease to nod o'er charts and orders and maps,
As softly through the open window come
The last few dying notes of "Taps."

— DEANE SCOTT

University High School, Normal

Ruth Stroud, teacher

GAVROCHE

Some men look for adventure, some find it, some do not; but with Gavroche it was the other way around: Adventure found him. Gavroche! That is only another name for adventure — adventure in life, adventure in play, adventure in spirit, and even adventure in dreams. All these were a part of Gavroche.

The street fight at the barricade was probably the greatest of all the adventures he had ever had. When things happened, when there was something exciting going on, Gavroche was in the middle of it. Perhaps Victor Hugo's words can show him to you better than I. "He sent, came, mounted, descended, remounted, bustled, sparkled. Gavroche was a whirlwind. He filled the air, he was everywhere at once."

If he was to be in the middle of a fight, Gavroche certainly had to have something to fight with. Challenging the commander of the barricade, Gavroche ordered, with his small but mighty voice in a tone only he could use, "A musket! I want a musket! Why don't you give me a musket? I had one in 1830, and I must have one now. I want a musket!"

But was it really a musket he wanted? No, it was really just his way of escaping from our world of boredom to his world of merriment.

ment and adventure. A snicker and a "Why you're only a little gamin" was the only reply he received. So off he marched in his bird-like fashion, off to instruct the laborers that the barricade was too low here, and there wasn't enough here, and that this barricade would not even stop a snail. Throughout the street fight at the barricade Gavroche had the time of his life. He played the role of lookout, rebel, and even delivery boy, ducking both bullets and sabers. This war was his world: his life of fun and merriment and his world of adventure.

For the normal human the battle would have been enough excitement, enough adventure, but not for Gavroche. He felt that there was one place still more adventurous, more exciting — no man's land. Yes, between the two forces; what for? Why for the merriment, the adventure, the feeling he had when he was being shot at. Oh yes, while he was out there, he could steal the cartridge boxes of the enemy dead. Once again Victor Hugo's words are needed to catch Gavroche. "He crawled on his belly, ran on his hands and feet, took his basket in his teeth, twisted, glided, writhed, and wormed his way from one body to another."

Through the smashing hell of bullets, Gavroche had his fun, his adventure. He laughed at the men firing at him. He was greatly amused. This was great sport. "He lay down, then rose up, hid in a doorway, then sprang out, always with the bullets chasing him, disappeared, reappeared, escaped." He escaped but only for the moment.

One bullet, a single bullet had stopped the bird's flight. He was on his knees; blood was running down his face, but still the bright flame in his eyes sparkled, the sparkle of the eyes of this brave bird who had the fulfillment of his desire: adventure. The area about Gavroche was brilliant and bright as if God himself was there. Both forces stopped — amazed. The flame flickered and then it was gone. His body crumpled to the ground. The bright light slowly dimmed. The "gamin's" soul had taken flight.

— DICK ANDERSON, University High School, Normal
Lela Winegarver, teacher

THE FIRE WAGON

FIRE! With hoofbeats, clang, and rattle,
There it goes, the town fire wagon,
Like an armored knight to battle
Against the flaming, smoking dragon.

— JOHN RAUBA
J. Sterling Morton High School, Cicero
Marjorie Diez, teacher

LAST TRIP HOME

The last few minutes! The big clock on the wall with its measured beat, relentlessly draws its hands toward the departure hour. The oppressive silence of the deserted small town waiting-room remains unbroken save for the occasional rattling of a window by the chill fall wind sweeping in across the river and the hissing and popping of burning wood in the great iron stove.

Much is said about the dramas enacted in the great city depots; of the sorrows of the teeming populace as loved ones leave. There is noise and commotion everywhere, and one's own troubles seem to fade with the realization that he is but a small cog in the great machine of humanity: but here in the little station is silence — only silence.

Too soon out of the night comes the train. We file from the war station onto the dark, windswept platform. A few quiet last minute words pass. Now the figure in khaki moving along in the aisle of the coach is blurred by the steamed windows.

There is a clattering and rumbling, a clicking of switch frogs, and the train is on its way. The glow of the lantern bobbing from the rear of the last coach diminishes, disappears into the night.

He is gone — forever.

— GEORGE BOON, J. Sterling Morton High School, Cicero
Mrs. Florence McKenzie, teacher

A DAY TO REMEMBER

A nine year old boy stood in his pajamas tugging at the comforter covering his mother. "Mom, wake up. Today's Saturday. We have to get dressed early, remember?"

Mrs. Dion awoke slowly rubbing her eyes and looked at Reed. How cute he was, the image of his father. He'd grow up to be just as handsome too. Smiling she said, "Okay, Reed, I'm awake. You can start the water running in the tub."

She slipped out of bed and into her housecoat. To the picture on her dresser she said, "Good morning, you handsome husband. I miss you so much."

The boy heard only the cheerful voice. She had to turn her head quickly so he would not see the two tears that fell lightly across her cheek. When he had gone, she dressed in the blue dress that was her husband's favorite. She looked at herself in the mirror and admitted, "You've aged quite a bit this past month. You must do better. You miss Lee, but you've still got Reed. He's much like Lee and now you have to be both father and mother to him. A boy his age needs a

father to take him fishing and swimming and to help him build a kite. Reed will need all those things."

Breakfast was over. It was time now to leave the house. "Reed," Mrs. Dion said, untying her apron strings, "Will you run upstairs and get my purse?"

He paused at the dresser to look at the picture of his father, a first lieutenant in the air corps. "Hello, Pop. We never did get to go fishing together, but I guess I can teach Mom how to fish. At least she'll be able to fry them if I catch some. So long, Pop. We're leaving now."

At two o'clock that afternoon in a recreation hall at an army flying field, a major spoke to the audience. "Here stands Lee Dion's son, and I am greatly honored to pin the D. F. C. and Purple Heart on him in memory of a great man and a great flyer who did his work well but will never return to wear the medals he earned."

The band struck up with the Air Corps song, and all army men saluted while a lady in blue slowly walked up to stand beside her son.

— LAURETTA NOVAK, J. Sterling Morton High School, Cicero

Mr. J. F. Anderson, teacher

ON ONE OF THOSE ISLANDS

A division of the American infantry were receiving their orders on a small Jap-held island in the Pacific. The commanding officer wound up:

"... and remember, men, the password is 'cat's paw.' No one will be admitted without it. On your way now, and good luck!"

The men filed into the dense jungle. Mosquitoes and tangled underbrush were secondary matters when compared to Jap snipers lurking in the trees.

In the meantime Jack was on guard duty at the post. Now and then he heard shrieks and machine-gun fire. His buddy, Ray, was in there. "Please, God, let him come back."

After hours of waiting in the pitch darkness, Jack heard footsteps in the bushes.

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"A friend." (Thank heaven, it was Ray's voice!)

"Give me the password."

"Cat's eye."

"Don't be a fool, Ray; give me the password."

"Cat's eye."

"You know I have my orders, Ray. In the name of heaven, *give me the password!*"

"Cat's eye."

Jack lifted his rifle and the machine-gun fire rang out. Once again the stillness settled down.

When the first streak of dawn crossed the camp, they found the body of Ray, prostrate on the ground, with twisted arms, and behind him ten dead armed Japs.

— IMOGEN SWANEY, J. Sterling Morton High School, Cicero
Mr. J. F. Anderson, teacher

HOUSE CLEANING

For months and months it has been winter. You think it will never end, and then one morning you wake up. A gentle little breeze is blowing in through your window. You sniff at it tentatively. You look out the window. The sky is flushed a delicate pink and gold and lavender. You fall back on the bed, stretch your arms above your head and blissfully close your eyes.

Downstairs you hear Dad say to Mom, "I guess we can turn the furnace off today." And then from the maple outside your window a robin chirps. "By golly, it's spring!" Dreamily you think "It's time to start playing ball and go fishing."

At least that's what you're thinking when things begin to happen downstairs. "Come, Dad," Mom says, "let's get the rugs out. We'll put this mattress out on the porch, and Don'll help you move the piano when he gets up. And then you get the ladder and get the curtains down so I can hang them out to air."

Dad doesn't say anything and neither do you. It's no use; Mom is an old campaigner at this business, and you are licked at the start.

Spring house cleaning must be a disease. There is no other way to account for it. Undoubtedly it is induced by a virus that flourishes only in the female of the species and is passed on from mother to daughter. I wonder what cave women found for the cave men to carry out of their homes at the first breath of spring. No doubt they had to roll the rocks out and dust them off and put them back.

But at least that could be accomplished in a day. Now house cleaning goes on for weeks. It is no use to sneak away. When hunger forces you back, there are the rugs you beat this morning waiting to be laid. And the mattresses — oh, yes, the mattresses — I wonder if the guy who made the first could have known the anguish his fellow men were going to suffer because of his accursed mattress. The old ones — but why should I detail the horror of the struggle to get the mattress back through the doorways and onto the bed. The new ones have hand holds on them, but they are filled so full of springs and padding and packing that they weigh as much as the old ones. You can't bend them or push them or kick them; you just have to carry

them. Nothing short of a derrick could handle them gracefully. Now there's an idea! A derrick, household size, especially designed for house cleaning. Imagine yourself sitting in the cab of such a derrick pulling throttles and levers and shouting at Mom, "Hey, hook that chain around the piano leg and stand back!" Of course such a device would have an automatic carpet beater attached to it somewhere.

But in the meantime, house cleaning still goes on, and the best part of the spring is wasted. Your home is gone. All the dear old familiar things have been moved or disguised under slip covers. The pictures to which you have become accustomed are put up in the attic and new ones are brought down; and it is weeks and weeks before you can put out the light and still find your bed.

The painful process of readjustment goes on slowly, but before it is completed another year has rolled by, and some warm balmy morning you wake up and hear Mom say to Dad, "Come on, let's get the rugs out. We'll put this mattress out on the porch, and Don'll help you move the piano."

Oh, brother! It's started again!

— DONALD SHAVER, Alexis Community High School
Marian G. Hake, teacher

FATHER VERSUS THE PAPER BOY

My father takes an insane delight in mentally torturing our paper boy; and the paper boy, an independent little cuss, does everything in his power to exasperate Father. Who has the greater success is debatable; but between the two of them, my mother and I are practically crazy.

Since ours is the last house on that sweet little fellow's route and he very often exhausts his supply of papers before getting here, he conveniently forgets that we exist and goes merrily on his way, leaving us without our morning contact with the outside world. Father, forgetting that there is a war on and that help is hard to find, paces madly from room to room, window to window, swearing he will deduct the price of that paper from the boy's weekly pay. Still hanging hopefully on to the remote possibility he will come, Father waits till the last moment and then defiantly marches off to work without knowing whether "Waldo" or the "Masked Marauder" won the wrestling match.

The next morning everyone is tense. Father has sworn revenge and is hiding behind the front door, waiting for the fiend who forgot to bring his paper. Ah! Here he comes. As he reaches the porch,

Father flies out the door and pounces on him, growling, "Why didn't you leave a paper yesterday?"

The poor kid, frightened almost to tears, manages to stammer something about not being paid last week.

"What? Why, I just paid you the other day!"

"That was a week ago."

And thus they go—round and round. Father, cheated of his revenge, stomps up the steps and releases his anger on us, poor innocent bystanders.

As the paper begins to come regularly, there is harmony—until the next time. Then Father goes off on another rampage.

It's an endless cycle that keeps the whole family in a turmoil.

—PAT FITZGERALD, Pekin Community High School
Bernice Falkin, teacher

THE SCULPTOR

The moist and yielding clay
Awaits the sculptor's hand;
Inert, unshapely mass,
A blob upon the stand.
And he, with fingers deft,
Holds in his mind one thought;
Moulds swift and sure the shape
None other yet has wrought.
He creates then a piece
Unknown until that time;
And thus, alike to God,
He reaches the sublime.

—BARBARA BICK
J. Sterling Morton High School, Cicero
Mrs. Zada T. Templeton, teacher

DENIM PANTS A LA WHITMAN

I see you in the catalogue.

"Strong, indestructible, sanforized.

Shrinkage guaranteed less than one percent.

Sale for a short time only, \$1.69."

One dollar, sixty-nine cents!

One hundred and sixty-nine pennies for this miracle of the earth!

One hundred and sixty-nine pennies for the work you are:

The tired old Negro with dimming eyes, plucking the fluffy cotton

Straight from the earth — from the sun — with fibers long and
strong;

The carder, the spinner, the weaver, the dyer, the sanforizer, the
cutter, the stitcher;

Each to his own skill, a small part of him incorporated into you.

You are the cotton of the deep South, the indigo of India;

Tin of Bolivia, brass — copper of Michigan, zinc of Missouri — your
buttons are these;

All are united in you — a part of your being.

You are part of me, too, for are we not of the same Earth?

You lie, folded and smooth, on the dark store-room shelf,

Dreaming peacefully of that which you have been;

I lie on the mountain slope, dreaming of that which is to be.

One day I see your likeness on the book's slick page

And come to buy.

I take you home — now you are my slave,

Bound to serve me as I see fit.

Our paths are united.

You cover me from the cold for the rest of your days,

Wearing slowly to nothing in my service,

Yet still you dream, for as you grow pale and worn,

You return once more unto the dust from which you came

To nourish other denim pants of other days.

I, too, share this destiny.

Someday I, too, shall return to earth —

Nourish other life to wear the denim pants of your sustaining,

And they in their turn the same, and theirs the same.

We are one — a small unit in the vast Cycle of Things,

You and I, O denim pants!

— BARBARA BICK

J. Sterling Morton High School, Cicero

Mrs. Zada T. Templeton, teacher

WHAT AMERICANISM MEANS TO ME

Americanism is many things.

It is tradition; the tradition of great men and common people, of deeds great and small.

It is a symbol.

And it is all the little things that make us glad to live in America.

Tradition. . . . the boys charging up Bunker Hill, and the bare, bleeding feet at Valley Forge. . . . those who died on the battleship *Maine*, "By Fate unwarned, in Death unafraid". . . . the Blue and the Grey at Gettysburg, and the blood in the valleys of France. . . . the poppies that blow in Flanders fields, and the bombs that burst on the Rhine. . . . tradition. . . .

Great men. . . . a general called Washington, a President called Washington, also a Washington who chopped down a cherry tree. . . . a good neighbor named Monroe, a common man called Jackson. . . . a man named Lincoln splitting rails, and a man named Lincoln breaking chains. . . . a President Wilson winning a war, and a President Wilson losing a peace. . . . a common man named Wendell Willkie, who erected in men's minds the shining goal of One World. . . . a prophet named Franklin Roosevelt who led his people from bondage, but to whom it was not given to enter the promised land. . . . great men. . . . and there are more. . . .

Symbol. . . . a dry scrap of parchment that says all men are created equal. . . . a pencil scrawl on a wrinkled sheet of brown paper that dedicates a people to an unfinished work — still unfinished. . . . a cracked bell proclaiming Liberty throughout the land. . . . a great lady raising a torch beside a golden door. . . . symbol. . . .

Little things. . . . walking with the family to church on Sunday morning through quiet, sunlit streets. . . . children gaily playing tag in the school yard, or shooting marbles on the walk. . . . sitting in the ball-park eating popcorn and drinking pop and telling the umpire "where to get off at". . . . a policeman helping a little girl across the street. . . . hot dogs. . . . ice cream cones. . . . public schools. . . . free museums. . . . cowboy movies. . . . little things, lots of little things. . . .

Maybe Americanism is what you feel when you hear the gaunt, weary prisoners standing in the yard of a Philippine prison camp singing "God Bless America," while tears run down their cheeks. Maybe it's what you feel when you see the Flag being raised or hear the "Star Spangled Banner."

Or maybe it is what you do when you walk down to the polling place and mark that X in the little square; or when you read the morning paper; or when you stand up in a public forum and speak your mind.

But then Americanism also might mean some other things which maybe we do not like to think about. . . . four million slaves, and

a war that freed some of them. . . . prejudice. . . . bigotry. . . . bread lines once. . . . race-riots once. . . . slums and poverty still. . . .

Americanism means America, and America means a place where a heritage of great deeds has given us the inspiration to work and fight to preserve the things we love in our country; where belief in the symbol of Liberty has given us the courage to destroy the ugly thing we do not love; where a great past has given us faith in a greater future. It has given each individual the opportunity to make the best of himself that he is able. It has made us truly the masters of our own destinies.

But today Americanism has come to mean something more than merely the "American Way of Life." For the American Way cannot exist in a vacuum. Its very existence depends on the peace and well-being of the rest of the world. On a planet that is smaller today than all of America fifty years ago—a sixty-hour world where every man and every nation is our neighbor—, allegiance to America must necessarily mean a sort of allegiance to the entire world.

Our love for America must be broad enough to include the rest of the nations. For until there is peace and prosperity among all peoples, there will be no peace and prosperity in America. America cannot live alone. If chaos continues throughout the world, there will be not room in it for Americanism.

— DICK FIREMAN, Hyde Park High School, Chicago

Mrs. Louise L. Kirby, teacher

TRISTAN AND ISOLDE

Hello radio fans. This is Ted Husing, substituting for Milton J. Cross, who was to bring you this afternoon's tilt at the Metropolitan Opera House between Tristan and Isolde.

It's a great afternoon, folks, and from up here in Box 44 we can see the holiday crowds coming in, but there seems to be a little trouble at Gate Six. Can't make out yet what it is. Yes, there it is; the guard's having it out with a Tristan rooter who tried to get in the orchestra seats without a cutaway. In the aisles, the ushers are lying down and spelling out, "Please buy a program." Listen to the hand they get.

There's the orchestra coming in, and here comes Tristan wearing the blue and gold of old Cornwall. Incidentally, scouts say that he has developed a new high note which he can toss for sixty yards—and folks, that's a lot of yodeling, ha ha.

And from the opposite wing comes Isolde with her two hundred and fifty pound backfield. Say, listen to that crowd roar. She's running up and down the scales now, and in a moment we'll have the opening kickoff of the opera.

The conductor is on his podium now; and everyone is waiting tensely; not a sound in the house. AND THERE'S THE OPENING CHORD!

Tristan has received; he's running it back five, ten, fifteen — oh boy, — TWENTY-FIVE bars, and then Isolde stops him dead with a *terrific* harmony. Tristan is back on his feet; he takes the aria, and falls back to his end of the stage and kicks, oh, a *tremendously* long note over Isolde's head.

Isolde has picked up the aria; now she's running with it; she's going along the side of the orchestra; she crosses to the center of the stage; and here comes Tristan, charging in hard. THERE'S A FUMBLE folks; the aria is rolling around free, and now they're both in there after it.

The conductor is up on the stage, and in a moment we'll know who — There they go! Tristan and Isolde *both* have the aria! The conductor is urging them on, the audience is standing in its seats and screaming; and believe me folks, it's some show!

— BASIL GOULETAS, Hyde Park High School, Chicago
Miss Louie Deupres, teacher

LIMERICK

A boy with a genius I. Q.,
Applied to enter the "U".
"But your age is past ten,"
They wrote, "Most of our men,
At *that* age are practically through!"

— MARTHA CAMPBELL
Hyde Park High School, Chicago
Louise L. Kirby, teacher